OF

Religious Melancholy.

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

QUEEN

AT

WHITE-HALL,

March the 26*th*, 169½.

By the Right Reverend Father in God, John, Moor *Lord Biſhop of* Norwich.

Publiſhed by Her Majeſtie's Special Command.

The Third Edition.

LONDON:

Printed for *William Rogers*, at the *Sun* over againſt St. *Dunſtan's* Church in *Fleet-ſtreet.* 1693.

PSALM XLII. vi.

Why art thou cast down, O my Soul? and Why art thou disquieted in me?

A Man, in no part of his Life, wherein he is sensible he has offended God, can be exempted from the Duty of Repenting presently; it being an Obligation which constantly lieth upon him, whenever he perceives his Sin, to ask Pardon for it, and to forsake it.

However, considering the multitude of business, and many diversions men meet with in the ordinary course of things, that hinder them from repenting as they ought to do, of their Sins; it is of absolute necessity, that they should single out, and set apart several portions of their time, wherein they may exactly consider their Spiritual Condition, severely judge their Actions, and narrowly search into the occasions and causes of their Errors and Failings, and endeavour to find the best means to prevent the same crimes for the future.

A good part of that Season is now spent, which our Church hath appointed for a review of our Lives, and to discover our Trespasses against the Divine Laws, that we might humble our Souls for

them, and amend whatever we find amiſs. And during this Seaſon, you have heard the nature of Repentance often and fully explain'd and the moſt prevailing Reaſons urged to excite your care, and engage your diligence, in a matter of ſuch infinite conſequence to your Salvation; and I hope with good effect on the minds of many, who in ſecret have bleſſed God moſt heartily, for theſe publick occaſions of reforming themſelves, and making their peace with him.

But notwithſtanding theſe ſolemn Seaſons are deſigned for the benefit of all men; that the bad may be converted, that the weak may be confirmed; and that thoſe who have made a large progreſs in the ways of vertue, may ſtill proceed to further degrees of perfection; yet it is manifeſt, that as hardned ſinners, who have little fear of God, and no regard of their duty, do certainly grow worſe by their contempt and neglect of theſe Opportunities; ſo alſo, that divers good Chriſtians, but of timerous and melancholy Conſtitutions, do fear they do not become better, or receive any improvement from them.

For they, feeling no preſent comfort from their long and ſtrict Faſts, nor from their earneſt and often-repeated Prayers, do conclude, That whatever they have been doing in the Service of God, is ſo mean and full of Imperfections, that it will neither pleaſe him, nor profit their own Souls. Where-

Wherefore at this time I ſhall not inſiſt upon the Arguments, which are proper to affect and awaken obdurate Offenders; but rather apply my ſelf to the caſe of thoſe Melancholy Perſons, who, notwithſtanding they are in a ſafe condition, yet are in great need to have their minds quieted and compoſed. So that even they who really deſerve it, may have their ſhare of Advantage from ſuch holy Seaſons as theſe.

The ſcruples and fears which diſturb them are manifold: But I now only can have time to conſider two or three of thoſe Caſes; which as more commonly, ſo more violently uſe to diſorder and affright them; and ſhall give the moſt ſatisfactory anſwer to them that I can.

(1.) The firſt caſe is of thoſe who are apt to think, that the reformation of their lives hath not proceeded from a ſincere love of God, and an unwillingneſs to diſpleaſe him; but from a meer dread of thoſe puniſhments which he hath threatned.

(2.) The Second caſe relates to them who find a flatneſs on their Minds, and want of Zeal, when they apply themſelves to any Religious duty; which makes them fear, that what they do, is ſo defective and unfit to be preſented unto God, that he will not accept it; inſomuch as this coldneſs, when they are imploy'd in their Devotions, doth lamentably deject them, and even tempt them to lay the practice of them aſide.

(3.) The

them, and amend whatever we find amiss. And during this Season, you have heard the nature of Repentance often and fully explain'd and the most prevailing Reasons urged to excite your care, and engage your diligence, in a matter of such infinite consequence to your Salvation; and I hope with good effect on the minds of many, who in secret have blessed God most heartily, for these publick occasions of reforming themselves, and making their peace with him.

But notwithstanding these solemn Seasons are designed for the benefit of all men; that the bad may be converted, that the weak may be confirmed; and that those who have made a large progress in the ways of vertue, may still proceed to further degrees of perfection; yet it is manifest, that as hardned sinners, who have little fear of God, and no regard of their duty, do certainly grow worse by their contempt and neglect of these Opportunities; so also, that divers good Christians, but of timerous and melancholy Constitutions, do fear they do not become better, or receive any improvement from them.

For they, feeling no present comfort from their long and strict Fasts, nor from their earnest and often-repeated Prayers, do conclude, That whatever they have been doing in the Service of God, is so mean and full of Imperfections, that it will neither please him, nor profit their own Souls. Where-

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(3.) The third Case doth concern those unhappy Persons, who have naughty, and sometimes blasphemous Thoughts start up in their Minds, while they are exercised in the Worship of God, which makes them ready to charge themselves with the Sin against the Holy Ghost; to pronounce their Condition to be without hope of Remedy, and that God hath utterly cast them off.

(1.) I begin with those Persons, who are apt to think, that the Reformation of their Lives hath not proceeded from a sincere Love of God, and an unwillingness to offend him; but from a meer dread of those Punishments which he hath threatned to inflict on unrelenting Sinners. Their doubt is, that fear which hath had the greatest influence in reclaiming them from an ill Life, is but a slavish and sordid Passion, which God does despise, and that he will refuse all those Services, which do not spring from a nobler Principle: For seeing God is love, he will not be pleased with any Sacrifice, but what is offered by love. *See one of Mr Withins's Sermons.*

I answer, That there can be no question, but Love is a more noble Principle of Action than Fear: And therefore, that the Religious Service which hath its rise from love, is more perfect, more Angelical, and more grateful to God: But for all that, he will not turn aside his face from those weaker and less improved Servants of his, whose Ser-

Service and Obedience owe themſelves chiefly to their Fears.

They who have forſaken their evil ways, out of a horrible dread that they would lead them to the pit of Hell, will, it is to be hoped, find a place in the glorious Kingdom of Heaven. For Hell was made on purpoſe to terrifie daring Sinners, and to reduce and confine them within the bounds of their duty.

The thing then I affirm is this; That they who have departed from their Iniquities, out of fear, that had they continued in them, they ſhould have been condemned with everlaſting Burnings, will at the Judgment of the Great Day be allowed to have been true Penitents, whom God will ſet on his Right Hand, and receive into the Bright Manſions of infinite Happineſs; which may be proved by the following Reaſons.

(1.) Fear is one of the Paſſions God has planted in our Souls, as well as Love; they are both the Creatures of his Wiſdom and Power; and whatever he did put in us was for ſome end, and may have a good uſe. Wherefore, when the Paſſion of Fear doth ſerve the end for which God grafted it in our Minds, there can be no doubt but he will approve the good Effects which it doth produce.

Now the end for which God placed Fear in our Nature, was chiefly to beget in us an awful regard

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of his moſt Glorious Majeſty; to make us dread violating of his Laws, and doing any thing contrary to his Righteous Will; and alſo when we trip or go aſtray from his Ways, to quicken our Returns to our Duty.

So that when Fear doth prevail upon a Man to amend his bad Life, he puts his Paſſion to the very uſe for which he received it from God: And having thus applied it to the end for which it was made an Eſſential Ingredient of his Nature, we have no cauſe to queſtion but God will own him, and graciouſly allow his Obedience.

(2.) We may obſerve, That God hath enforced all the Laws he hath given to the Children of Men, by Threatnings, as well as by Promiſes; but as Promiſes are to work upon our Love, ſo Threats are to excite our Fears: God having made the Motives to our Obedience to anſwer the different Paſſions, with which he hath endued our Souls.

Wherefore there cannot be the leaſt reaſon to conceive, that God ſhould threaten Puniſhments againſt the diſobedient, which naturally act upon the fears of men, and yet not be pleaſed with the Service which theſe Fears raiſed by the Penalties annext to his own Laws, do bring forth. No, God therefore doth ſet Life and Death before Men, that the fear of Death may make them chuſe Life; and he threatneth them with Everlaſting Puniſhments, that

that the Amazement and Horrour, which the ſerious and due Conſideration of them will cauſe in their Souls, may powerfully engage them with all Speed and Care to labour to fit themſelves to partake of the Divine Mercies.

(3.) Our Bleſſed Saviour firſt, and his Diſciples after him in their Sermons, do addreſs themſelves not only to the Paſſion of Love, but alſo to that of Fear: which they never would have done, had they been conſcious that the Sacrifices of Fear would not have aſcended up to Heaven with a grateful Savour.

He that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; *but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned*; Doth not Chriſt here intend to bring Men to a belief of his Goſpel, and to yield Obedience to the Laws thereof, as well by the fears of Damnation, as the hopes of Salvation? And when he had cured the Man who had been afflicted with an Infirmity Thirty eight Years, he bids him *Sin no more leſt a worſe thing come unto him.* The Argument our Lord uſed to engage the poor impotent man to live innocently, was directed to the Paſſion of his Fear, taken from the Danger of a Calamity, greater than the very long Infirmity of which he now was cured, that would befal him, if he did ſtill continue in his Sins. Mark 16. 16.

Knowing the terror of the Lord, ſaith St. *Paul*, *we*

perſwade men. The Apoſtle well knew, that the greatneſs of theſe Terrors expreſt in the foregoing
2 Cor. 5. 10. Verſe; *That we muſt all appear before the Judgment ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad,* if fully and maturely weighed, would be of irreſiſtible force to recover men from a lewd and prophane Converſation. They muſt be brought to a ſtate of extream Obſtinacy or Deſparation, upon whom an Argument of ſuch wonderful Power and Efficacy can make no Impreſſion.

(2.) I come to a ſecond Caſe often complained of by ſome ſerious Chriſtians, which is a want of Inclination to holy things, and a coldneſs in their Devotions: They do not come to God's Houſe, nor addreſs themſelves to their Prayers, with ſuch an appetite as they do to the Buſineſs of the World; but want earneſt and fervent Deſires for the Succeſs of the Petitions they put up to their Father in Heaven; they cannot warmly engage their hearts in the Cauſe of their Salvation, but find a liſtleſneſs to Spiritual Exerciſes; which they apprehend to be a full proof of their Hypocriſie, and that God will refuſe their Prayers and Thankſgivings, as vain and inſincere Oblations.

Now before I proceed in the beſt and cleareſt Method I can, to relieve Perſons in this unhappy Con-

Condition; I desire it may be first observed, that why many have no more Zeal and Life in God's Service, is their own fault, for which they are greatly to be blamed.

Because this Dulness of Spirit that attends their Religious Exercises, does come from their own Negligence, and want of Consideration. They take Care to make an Appearance in the Congregation, but no care about what their Souls are there imployed. They have not considered of what infinite Importance it will be to them to serve God in the most acceptable manner, nor how they should render their Service acceptable, neither by what cause their Devotions have decay'd, nor by what means they may revive and increase them.

Now if they neither consider where they are, nor for what end they came, it is no wonder that their minds should be flat and unactive all the time they stand before the Lord, and very little concern'd for the prosperous Issue of the Prayers that are offered up by the Congregation.

As therefore it is high Presumption for such careless Persons to hope for any benefit by that part they bear in the Publick-Worship; so they may cure their Malady, by retiring from their Business and their Pleasures, and by reflecting in good earnest upon the terrible Dangers whereunto they do eve-

ry hour expoſe their immortal Souls.

But theſe are not the Men to whoſe Caſe I would ſpeak at this time: but I direct my Diſcourſe to thoſe who have frequently ſtriven to remove this coldneſs from their Souls, when they did approach the Heavenly Throne, and yet have failed in their Attempt. Now in abatement of their Trouble, give me leave to lay the following Obſervations before them.

(1.) That the difference of Degrees of Affections, with which Men ſerve God, does often depend upon the difference of their Tempers and Conſtitutions. Some have ſuch heavy Conſtitutions, that it muſt be a great matter that will work upon their Hopes or Fears; and it will require ſome time to make them very ſenſible either of their gain or loſs.

But others have ſuch a tenderneſs in their Natures, and ſuch quickneſs of Senſe, that the leaſt things do much affect them: A little Proſperity makes all their Spirits to mount, and they are overflow'd with Joy; and as ſmall a Croſs ſinks them down, and cauſes them to have ſad and melancholy Perſwaſions of their Condition.

Now People of ſuch various Diſpoſitions, notwithſtanding they have equally endeavour'd to prepare themſelves, cannot ſerve God with equal affections: but yet he may be alike pleaſed with what they

they both do. Becauſe he will meaſure their Obedience by the ſincerity of their minds, that lies in their own power, and not by the difference of their Conſtitutions which was not made by themſelves.

The Conſtitutions of ſome men being much warmer than thoſe of others, they eaſier take fire whether they are paying Homage to God, or doing Buſineſs among Men. Where therefore Men have more heat in their natural Temper, it is no wonder they ſhould have more zeal in their Devotions. But God will not reject any man becauſe he is of a cold Complexion, or diſdain his reaſonable Sacrifice, becauſe it is offered with leſs vehemence of Paſſion.

(2.) We may ſay further, That they who are not carried by their Paſſions into the Service of God, but render Worſhip to him upon rational Motives, becauſe he is the giver of all good things, ſeem to act upon a higher and more ſublime Principle: For notwithſtanding they are deſtitute of that pleaſing warmth in their Paſſions, which provokes others to pray unto God, and to be thankful unto him, yet they do not ceaſe to celebrate his Praiſe, becauſe it is their duty to do it, and becauſe Reaſon ſuggeſts that they ought to make grateful acknowledgments of his infinite Mercies.

(3.) We may obſerve, That the moſt zealous are not always the beſt men. For their zeal may be without knowledge, or on the wrong ſide; as it

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was in St. *Paul*, when he perſecuted the Church. And it is his own Obſervation, That notwithſtanding a man had ſuch a zeal for the Cauſe of God, as would prompt him to ſuffer Martyrdom, and yet wanted Charity, his ſharpeſt Sufferings would profit him nothing.

I muſt confeſs, where a man is zealouſly affected in a good matter, and his active Spirits are diſcreetly directed to the Service of God, ſuch an one may prove a glorious Inſtrument for the propagating and promoting the Fear and Honour of God among men; and alſo may have a more ſenſible pleaſure in every Religious Performance. But all cannot raiſe their Affections to this pitch; however, *God will not quench the ſmoaking flax, nor break the bruiſed reed*; but pardon the wandrings, pity the weakneſſes, quicken the affections, and make gracious allowances for all the defects of infirm, but honeſt Chriſtians.

(4.) That the moſt holy Servants of God cannot maintain an equal warmth in their Devotions at all times. Experience doth teach them, that in ſome Seaſons, an unaccountable heavineſs will ſeize upon their hearts while they are on their bended knees, ſupplicating the forgiveneſs of their ſins, who at other times can put their Souls all in a bright and pure flame by intenſe meditations on the unſpeakable love of God.

If therefore now and then you perceive your minds

minds dull and heavy at your Prayers, it is but what ſometimes doth happen to the moſt ſincere Chriſtians, how great Care and Diligence ſoever they uſe to uphold life and vigour in their Souls; ſo that this is no juſt cauſe of diſquiet and dejection of ſpirit. Moreover, Sickneſs, Loſſes, and all Afflictions, do ſometimes ſo diſorder the Paſſions, as oppreſs the Spirits even of the beſt men, that it is hardly poſſible they ſhould ſerve God with as much chearfulneſs under Calamities and Troubles and at other times; tho' they may have as much integrity, and as ſincere deſires to pleaſe him; and he will take what they then do, as kindly at their hands, and bountifully reward ſuch Services.

Hence I gather, that ſince men are not able at all times to keep their Affections at an equal height when they addreſs themſelves to their heavenly Father, either in the Church, or in their Cloſets, that he doth not expect it from them; and they ought not to give place to melancholy Fears, when they ſhall find it otherwiſe with themſelves: God has made nothing the ſubject of our obedience, which is not within the bounds of our abilities; and he will at the Day of Judgment condemn men for the Actions only, which proceeded from their Wills; and not for that want of heat in their Paſſions, which was owing to the natural make of their Conſtitutions, that they could not help; or to outward

ward unhapy Circumſtances, which they had not at their command.

(5) What hitherto hath been ſaid about coldneſs and damps in the minds of men while they are engaged in religious duty, has been to comfort thoſe who are exceedingly grieved at it; and who yet have not been able to conquer it, tho' they have uſed true pains for that purpoſe. Now notwithſtanding it is not to be expected, nor neceſſary, that theſe innocent Perſons ſhould meet with a compleat cure of their grief; yet I muſt tell them, that nothing will more enliven their Spirits in the Service of God, than deliberate Meditations of him, and of themſelves, before they enter upon any part of Divine Worſhip.

If they would often engage their minds in Contemplations about the Divine Attributes, and the Infinite Perfections of the Nature of God, it would ſtrangely help to deliver them from that drowſy Stupidity, of which they ſo ſadly complain, and which hath ſo ſtrong an influence on their Actions. For frequent thoughts of Almighty Power, will make the moſt ſturdy Temper to tremble, and the proudeſt heart to ſubmit. There is no thinking ſeriouſly of unſearchable Wiſdom, without being wrapt up in admiration of it, and becoming very willing to be ruled by it: And will not the meditations of Infinite Love, diffuſing it ſelf over the World,

World, oblige us to adore, to honour, to love and to praiſe that moſt glorious Spring from whence it floweth?

Do but conſider, as the Providence of God watches over all the Works of the Creation, ſo with what a particular care it hath preſerved you, and deliver'd you from the many and great Dangers, which you did not foreſee, and againſt which you could make no proviſion; and certainly it will give a ſenſible touch to your Soul, and cauſe you to break forth into Songs and Hymns of Thankſgiving.

But if you proceed ſtill further, to contemplate the deep Myſteries, and inconceivable Love ſhewn by Chriſt in the mighty Work of your Redemption, to conſider the great condeſcenſion of your Saviour, when he left the Heavens to dwell amongſt us; the wonderful humiliation of himſelf, when he took our Frail Mortal Nature upon him; the Pains, the Agonies, the Horrors of the moſt dreadful Death he ſuffered, to ſave us ungrateful Sinners; and this can hardly fail to diſſolve the moſt obdurate and ſtony heart, and make you firmly conclude, that you never can ſufficiently admire, love, ſerve, or ſuffer too much for this moſt Bleſſed Saviour.

Can your Paſſions continue all quiet, when you look to this your moſt merciful Redeemer, who left the Boſom of his Father to ſeek you, when you had loſt your ſelves in the ways of ſin, and the

paths that lead to death! Who came to procure Reconciliation for you with God, whom as you had heinouſly provoked, ſo you were in no reſpect able to make him ſatisfaction.

Do but with ſome ſeriouſneſs recollect how often the Lord hath ſpared you, when your own hearts have told you that you did deſerve puniſhment; How very often you have highly offended him, and fearfully looked when he ſhould deſtroy you; and yet you are ſtill ſuffer'd to be in the Land of the Living, as ſo many Monuments of his Compaſſion; and he is not yet wearied with waiting for your return, that he may be gracious unto you: Do, I ſay, but meditate upon theſe mercies of your God, and try whether your hearts will not all melt into love and affection.

Can we ſay too much, or think too long of this Saviour, who did joyn himſelf to our Fleſh, that he might looſe the Bands of our Iniquity; who being in the Form of God, took the Form of a Servant, that he might deſtroy the power of thoſe Sins, which would have enſlaved both our Souls and Bodies, and made us for ever miſerable?

Surely we cannot but fall down before the Lord, with the deepeſt Reverence, and eſteem him above every thing in Heaven and Earth, who hath created us according to his own Image; who hath redeemed us with the Blood of his own Son, and who

daily

daily doth aſſiſt us with the Graces of his moſt Holy Spirit, and who hath provided for us a Houſe not made with Hands, in the Heavens.

Let ſuch Subjects as theſe be the Arguments with which you entertain your Thoughts, before you begin any Religious Duty, and it will ſtrangely conduce to the filling your Souls with Light and Life, and make you diligently ſtudy to obtain God's Favour, and breed in you moſt paſſionate Deſires to dwell in his preſence to all Eternity.

(3.) I come to the laſt caſe I propoſed to ſpeak to, which doth relate to theſe unhappy perſons, who have naughty, and ſometimes Blaſphemous Thoughts ſtart in their Minds, while they are exerciſed in the Worſhip of God, which makes them ready to charge themſelves with the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, to pronounce their Condition to be without hopes of Remedy, and to fear that God hath utterly caſt them off. Now to give them the beſt eaſe and relief I am able, I will endeavour theſe two things.

(1.) To ſhew that their Caſe is not ſo dangerous as they take it to be.

(2.) To give proper advice for their behaviour under the tumultuous Diſorders of Mind, and for their recovery from them.

That their Caſe is not ſo dangerous as they apprehend it, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew by the following Conſiderations.

(1.) Becauſe theſe frightful Thoughts do for the moſt part proceed from the diſorder and indiſpoſition of the Body. And this I take to be evident, becauſe they are more rife and troubleſome, and inſult moſt over a Man after a fit of ſickneſs, or a great diſappointment, or a heavy loſs; which hath depreſt his Spirits, and made them groſs and heavy: but when it pleaſes God that he ſhall recover his health again, and his ſpirits grow finer, and move more briskly, and his ſtrength doth become more confirmed, then theſe perplexing thoughts uſe much to abate, and by degrees quite to vaniſh.

(2.) Becauſe they are moſtly good People, who are exerciſed with them. For bad men, whoſe Heads are buſied in laying one Scene of Wickedneſs or other, how they may gratifie their Malice, or execute their Revenge, or over-reach their Neighbours, or violate their Truſts, or ſatisfie their beaſtly Luſt, rarely know any thing of theſe kind of Thoughts, or uſe to complain of them. But they are honeſt and well-meaning Chriſtians of unhealthy Conſtitutions, and melancholy Tempers, who are ſo miſerably harraſs'd by them; who above all things earneſtly deſire an intereſt in their God and Saviour, and for that reaſon the leaſt diſhonourable thought of him, which inſinuates its ſelf into their Minds, is ſo dreadful unto them.

(3.) Becauſe it is not in the power of thoſe diſconſo-

conſolate Chriſtians, whom theſe bad Thoughts ſo vex and torment, with all their endeavours to ſtifle and ſuppreſs them. Nay often, the more they ſtruggle with them, the more they encreaſe; and when they are vehemently oppoſed, they do more domineer and terrifie men. And the true reaſon is, becauſe by ſucceſsful ſtrivings they do but feed this melancholy Humor, and grow more dejected. So that there is good cauſe, as I obſerved, to judge them to be Diſtempers of the Body, rather than Faults of the Mind.

(4.) We may obſerve, that they who labour under the burden of ſuch diſmal Thoughts are ſeldom betray'd into any great or deliberate ſin. For they having a very low opinion of the Condition of their Souls, are jealous of the leaſt Temptations, and tremble at the appearance of any notorious Evil. Which is the cauſe they commonly ſet a ſtrict guard over their Words and Actions.

Hence it is apparent, that the ſins which moſt eaſily captivate others, can ſcarce make an entrance into them. They have little temptation to Covetouſneſs, who can find no ſatisfaction in Riches. They cannot be hard hearted to their Neighbours in diſtreſs, who are ſo ready to beg the prayers and help of all about them. They are in no danger of being ſwell'd with Pride, who think a great deal worſe of their own ſtate than it deſerves. They being

being then thus humbled into a mean apprehenſion of themſelves by the calamitous diſorders of their Mind, to contend the more abundantly to keep themſelves blameleſs and unſpotted from the World, wherein they diſcovering no eaſe, no relief for their doleful Complaints, are not allured by any of its glittering or ſenſual Baits to tranſgreſs the Divine Laws.

From what has been ſaid it plainly follows, That there is more trouble then danger in the caſe of the dejected Chriſtians, which we have been conſidering. Altho I own that none do more deſerve our pity, ſo black and diſmal is the Sentence they pronounce againſt themſelves; and yet I make no queſtion but God in his own ſeaſon, and when he ſees it moſt proper for them, will in ſome meaſure ſettle and quiet their Minds, and alſo beſtow a large Recompence on them for all the Troubles and Sorrows they have ſuſtained out of fear that he was highly diſpleaſed with them.

I am now arrived at the laſt part of my Subject, which is to give the beſt Advice I can, for their behaviour under theſe perplexing Diſorders of Mind, and for their recovery from them. Which I ſhall endeavour in the following particulars.

(1.) *Frequently obſerve how your Thoughts are imployed. If they are engaged in a good Matter, encourage them to perſevere and ſecure them, all you can, from outward diſturbance and diverſions.

* *Vide St. Baſil, de moderandis animi cogitationibus* Tom. 2. p. 674.

If

If they are taken up in trifling and vain Subjects, of no real benefit to you, tranſlate them to ſome more noble and uſeful Argument. For as your Thoughts are, ſo your Actions will be: Men cannot think fooliſhly and act wiſely. Beſides idle Thoughts are Neighbours to bad ones, and there is a ſtraight and ſhort paſſage from one to the other.

But if they are exerciſed in any evil deſign, it highly behoves you to extinguiſh and ſuppreſs them; for if the Fountain be muddy, all the Streams muſt partake of its impurity. *And this Work you ought to take the firſt opportunity to do, and that with all your might, not only becauſe it is of abſolute neceſſity to the Health and Peace, and Innocence of your Soul; †but becauſe the Victory over them will be much eaſier at their firſt appearance, than after, by ſuffering them to dwell with you, you have given them ſome countenance of encouragement: and ſo that Conqueſt which would have coſt you but ſmall pains, may become doubtful, where you are to contend with thoughts, whoſe long ſtanding hath confirm'd, and almoſt rooted them in your Nature.

* *Dum enim cogitatio mala in initiis eſt, facile poteſt abjici à corde. Nam ſi frequenter iteretur & diu permaneat, adducit animum ad conſenſum & poſt conſenſum intra cor ſuum confirmatum, certum eſt quid ad peccati tendat effectum.* Hieronym. in Cantic. Cantic. Hom. 4. p. 117.

† *Reprime porro Cogitationem ſuperbiæ, priuſquam te ſuperbia deprimat. Deſtrue Cogitationem arrogantiæ, antequam ipſa te ſubvertat. Effringe atque excludè concupiſcentiam priuſquam te concupiſcentia tridat ac conterat.* Ephræm. Syri. Op. p. 404.

Thus frequent Reviews taken of our Thoughts, will produce both power and skill to manage them wiſely,

wiſely, and may in good meaſure prevent or cure the Troubles complained of by theſe Melancholy Perſons.

(2.) * Endeavour to keep all your Paſſions within due Bounds, ſince Storms of Paſſion confound the Soul and make way for evil thoughts. And whatever was the firſt Cauſe of the Paſſion, it is apt before it goes off, to run them into thoſe frightful Reflections, which they ſo much dread, and after the weakneſs and indiſpoſition which a ſtrong Paſſion leaves behind it, they will be leſs able to repel them. So that it is very bad for ſplenetick Perſons to give way to their Paſſions, which both bring their Diſtemper upon them, and unfit them to grapple with it.

* *Eſto mitis & placidus, & benevolentiæ plenus, & gratiæ, ſine ulla ſermo ducatur contumeliâ. Abſit pertinax in familiari ſermone contentio: quæſtiones enim magis excitare inanes, quam utilitates aliquid efferre ſolet. Diſceptatio ſine irâ, ſuavitas ſine amaritudine ſit, monitio ſine aſperitate, hortatio ſine offenſione.* S. Ambr. Tom 4. Col. 16.

Nay, they cannot ſafely give any ſcope to the moſt pleaſing Paſſions; for they ſometimes ſhall find as bad effects in the exceſſes of Joy, as of any of the ſower and churliſh Paſſions, and be as greatly dejected after them.

It would be much for their advantage to bring themſelves to an equal and ſteddy temper, ſo as none of the Affairs of the World may make a deep Impreſſion upon them; to be mild and gentle in their behaviour; to avoid all needleſs contentions and heats; to be ready to do good to every body; but

but never to do things ſeemingly hard, except where great neceſſity requires it. Neither to ſet their hopes nor their fears too high; not groundleſly to deſpair where God has pronounc'd no Threats: nor fondly to preſume, where he hath made no Promiſes.

(3.) Do not leave your Callings, nor forſake the Poſt wherein Providence hath placed you. As before it was my Advice not to ſet your hearts too much on the World, nor to ſuffer your Paſſions to run out vehemently after it; ſo now I exhort you not to quit your Imployment, and utterly to forſake it, by reaſon of the trouble of your Mind. For no buſineſs at all is as bad for you as too much: and there is always more Melancholy to be found in a Cloyſter, then in the Market-place. As when a man is too full of buſineſs he is ready to forget God, ſo when he is idle and deſtitute of all Employment, his head is apt to become a Cage, not only of unruly, but unclean Thoughts.

It will be therefore much to your detriment to hide your ſelves from your Friends, and to quit the Calling wherein you were exerciſed; in that people of dejected tempers never fare worſe than by themſelves, and when they have nothing to do. For when they have neither Company nor ſecular Affairs to take up their time, they will be muſing perpetually upon the Objections they make againſt themſelves, and their Thoughts will all fix and centre

upon the deſperate Condition, wherein their diſturbed Phanſy had placed their Souls. Whereas vertuous and cheerful Converſation, innocent recreations, and moderate Buſineſs will give great a diverſion to the Diſtemper, and much conduce to chaſe away theſe gloomy Apprehenſions.

(4.) When you find theſe Thoughts creeping upon you, be not mightily dejected, as if they were certain Tokens of your Reprobation. For ſo far as they depend upon the indiſpoſition of the Body, which for the moſt part they chiefly do, I take them no more to be marks of the Divine Diſpleaſure, than Sickneſs or Loſſes, or any other Calamity you may meet with in the World.

*Neither violently ſtruggle with them; ſince experience doth teach that they increaſe and ſwell by vehement oppoſition; but diſcipate and waſte away, & come to nothing when they are neglected, and we do not much concern our ſelves about them; for it is the cuſtom of the Mind of Man much oftner to think and reflect upon thoſe things, which either delight or grieve him, than upon thoſe which he judges, are to be deſpiſed.

* *Nolite litigare cum perverſis cogitationibus, vel perverſa voluntate; ſed cum vobis infeſte ſunt, aliqua utili cogitatione & voluntate mentem veſtram, donec evaneſcant fortiter occupate. — neque delectatis, neque contriſtemini de illarum infeſtatione quamdiu illas, ſicut dixi contemnendo, ſuperatis & nullam iis aſſenſum Præbetis; ne occaſione triſtitiæ iterum redeant ad memoriam, & ſuam importunitatem reſuſcitent.* S. Anſelm. Ep. 133. p. 414.

I know this would be no good advice, did theſe Thoughts lye within our power, and were the products of our choice, as all ſins are: for then the ſooner

ſooner and the more vigorouſly we reſiſt them, ſo much the better it will be for us, for at firſt ſin is weak, and has little intereſt in us, and Conſcience is tender, and is made extream uneaſie by any compliance with it; ſo that if we did bravely oppoſe it in the beginning of the Siege, the Victory would be moſt certain: But when in length of time ſin hath got both ſtrength and confidence, our very Nature muſt undergo a great change before it can be ſubdued. But now having proved that theſe bad Thoughts do reſult more from the weakneſs of the Body, than from the viciouſneſs of the Mind, it is evidently apparent, that by another ſort of treatment they muſt have a cure.

It is not therefore a furious Combat with Melancholy Thoughts, which will but weaken and ſink the Body, and ſo make the Caſe worſe, but a gentle Application of ſuch comfortable things as reſtore the ſtrength, and recruit the languiſhing Spirits that muſt quaſh and diſperſe theſe diſorderly Tumults in the Head.

Whenever therefore theſe troubleſome Thoughts begin to ſtir, do not fall into any violent Paſſion, which will abate the Courage, and ſhatter the Reſolutions of your Soul; but having firſt commended your miſerable Caſe to the tender care and compaſſions of your Heavenly Father, who will not let you be afflicted above meaſure, endeavour with

a meek and ſedate temper quietly to bear them.

(5.) Do not think the worſe of God for them, or accuſe his Providence of want of care of you. For he might have permitted ſuch Thoughts to have continued perpetually, or at leaſt to have viſited you much oftner, and in a mote frightful manner, and all this without the leaſt diminution of his Juſtice. But as his Mercy appears in the degrees and intervals of your Sufferings, ſo it doth alſo in the ends of them. He ſending theſe Afflictions for wiſe and kind Reaſons; that they might be powerful Preſervatives of your Souls againſt the hainous ſins of a crooked Generation in which you live, that cry loudly to Heaven for Vengeance, that they might leſſen your Inclinations to the Enjoyments of this Life; that they might deaden your Appetites to ſenſual Pleaſure, and take your hearts off of the periſhing Goods of the World, which can afford you ſmall ſatisfaction, ſo long as your Minds are haunted with theſe black Thoughts.

Nothing will diſpoſe you more to have Compaſſion on your ſuffering Brethren than your own Sorrows; and nothing make you leſs envy the towring height and proſperity of others, which to perſons in your mournful ſtate, muſt be ſo inſipid and uncomfortable, that you will indeed be concern'd for the many dangers of their ſtation; but never wiſh you conld ſupplant them. In a word, nothing will cauſe

you

you more to feel your own Infirmities, and a want of the Divine Aſſiſtance, nothing will ofner carry your thoughts to Heaven, than your preſent Diſconſolation and Trouble, whoſe length and acuteneſs will alſo make Heaven it ſelf taſte the ſweeter, whenſoever God of his Infinite Mercy, ſhall bring you thither.

(6.) Let not theſe afflicting Thoughts diſcourage you from the exerciſe of your Devotions, nor tempt you to omit, or negligently diſcharge any one Chriſtian Office or Duty. Go ſtill on in the ways of Religion, and do the work of the Lord notwithſtanding theſe performances to your ſelves may ſeem flat and heavy, and ſuch as will neither be grateful to him, nor procure good to your Souls. *Let your Prayers aſcend up to Heaven continually, altho at preſent you find no Anſwer or Return to your Petitions. *Is any among you Afflicted*, ſays St. *James*, *let him pray*, Prayer is the natural and the only ſafe refuge for the afflicted. It is a ſure ſtay to the heart when nothing elſe in the World can ſupport it. Nay, the liſtneſneſs to Prayer, ſo grievous to weak Chriſtians, will be removed by nothing ſo ſoon, and ſo effectually, as by Prayer it ſelf: For Prayer refines the Thoughts, purifies the Heart, and exalts the Soul above its natural pitch; ſo that he who did enter upon his Prayers with ſome coldneſs, ſhall often receive wonderful joy in his mind, before he comes to the

* *Cum autem vultis orare, aut aliquam bonam meditationem intendere; ſi vobis tunc importune ſuncogitationes, quas non debetis ſuſcipere, nunquam propter illarum importunitatem bonum, quod incepiſti velitis demittere.* S. Anſelm. lib

the end of them. Nothing will make the Soul partake ſo much of the Divine Nature and ſo cloſely unite it to God as Devout Prayer.

But further, as theſe diſconſolate Seaſons eſpecially, let the matters of your Prayers be ſuch as doth imply your repoſing an extraordinary confidence and truſt in God, although he ſeems now to hide his face from you; for it will be a thing moſt acceptable to him, and a ſtrong proof of your Integrity, that you ceaſe not to do your duty, even when you find little pleaſure in it; and ſtill continue to caſt your ſelf and cauſe wholly upon him, when he does appear to be afaa off, and to have no regard to your cries and your tears.

And here it may be fit to give you a Caution againſt long Prayers; for your heads, under this diſturbance, will bear nothing which requires length of attention: let your Prayers therefore be frequent rather than long; ſuch as may cauſe delight, and not prove tedious. There is no time, or place, or imployment do ſo engage you, but you may have leiſure now and then to ſend up your deſires to Heaven, and if they be ſincere and fervent, they will prevail with God, how ſhort ſoever they are: for it is not the multitude of your words, but the honeſt diſpoſition of your heart, which will incline him to hear you. And this Advice is therefore to be inſiſted upon, becauſe melancholy Chriſtians have been obſerved to ſuffer by the

the length of their Prayers and their Faſts.

Moreover do not forſake the Table of the Lord, notwithſtanding there alſo you meet no comfort, and ſhould be altogether unable to move and effect your hearts with holy reflections upon the moſt cruel and ſhameful death of your Bleſſed Saviour: for that heavenly Bread will refreſh your Souls, and encreaſe your Graces, and repleniſh your hearts with joy as ſoon as ever God ſhall find you qualified for ſo great mercies.

What evil thoughts then ſoever are injected into your Minds, ſo long as you perſiſt in a godly courſe of life, there can be no colour of doubt but God will love you, and approve your Services. For he no where hath ſaid, that Men ſhall be condemned for their ungovernable Thoughts, over which they have no dominion: but he hath promiſed that all thoſe who are not weary in well-doing, ſhall in due ſeaſon reap everlaſting life.

Now ſhould theſe perplexing Thoughts laſt as long as you live, which is the hardeſt thing you can ſuppoſe in this caſe; yet that (as I ſaid before) would be no more an Argument of Gods Anger than a Fevor, or a Fire, or the loſs of a Friend, or any other Affliction; nor of the unſoundneſs and hypocriſie of your Mind, who in this matter are only the Sufferer; for as you did not invite them, ſo they continue with you much againſt your conſent.

Let

Let not therefore your preſent Trials and Humiliations make you deſpair of finding favour with a God of boundleſs Mercy and moſt tender Compaſſions: Perſevere in your Duty and confide in his infinite goodneſs, and at length the clouds, which now darken your Minds, ſhall all vaniſh, and be ſucceeded by ſteddy and pure light, your fears ſhall be turned into full Aſſurances of unconceivable Happineſs; and all the Diſorders, Tumults, and Confuſions in your Souls ſhall be changed into Eternal Peace, and undiſturbed and endleſs Joys.

Give me leave to conclude all in the words of the *Pſalmiſt*, who had been a Man of Sorrows from his youth, and yet ever received Supplies from the Lord anſwerable to his Diſtreſs, *Ye that fear the Lord, praiſe him--for he hath not deſpiſed, nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted: neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him he heard. Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he ſhall ſtrengthen thy heart. I will be glad and rejoyce in thy mercy, for thou haſt conſider'd my trouble; thou haſt known my ſoul in adverſities. I will ſing unto the Lord, becauſe he hath dealt bountifully with me; yea, I will hope continually, and yet praiſe him more and more. O how great is thy goodneſs, which thou haſt laid up for them that fear thee: O love the Lord all ye his Saints; for the Lord preſerveth the faithful. They that know thy name will put their truſt in thee for thou haſt not forſaken them who ſeek thee.*

FINIS.